

Information

The Council on Postsecondary Education and the Kentucky Department of Education recently embarked on a joint effort to improve the high school feedback report. The Council on Postsecondary Education's new statewide student placement policy prompts this initiative. One important change is that the revised report will define underprepared students as those scoring below 18 on the ACT. In the past, the report simply counted numbers of students who enrolled in one or more remedial courses in their freshman year of college.

From 1992-1999, the Council on Postsecondary Education, in conjunction with ACT and Kentucky's public and independent colleges and universities, produced annual editions of the report, allowing high schools and districts to gauge their students' performance during their first year in college. High schools could track the percentage of their recent graduates enrolled in postsecondary education, the institutions they were most likely to attend, the rates at which students enrolled in remedial or honors courses, and their first semester return rate.

In 1999, changes in the placement policies at some public universities raised concerns about the way Kentucky defines remediation. Each Kentucky public institution had its own threshold for placing students in remedial courses. Consequently, a decision by any institution to raise its threshold resulted in more students being placed in remedial courses. This might have created a public perception that student preparation in high school had declined.

In 2000, the Council on Postsecondary Education implemented a new "mandatory placement policy" to establish a consistent definition of underprepared students. The policy requires public colleges and universities to provide students scoring less than 18 on the ACT math, English, or reading tests with some form of academic assistance (whether remedial placement, tutoring, or enhanced courses) or reassessment. Institutions may treat these students as ready for entry-level coursework if they pass an alternate placement test.

The mandatory placement policy takes effect this fall for 2001 high school graduates. Individual institutions still may set higher placement standards in particular subject areas.

A revised high school feedback report will be issued later this year. It will track the placement and performance of students scoring below 18 on the ACT compared to all other students. Staff from the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Department of Education will meet with KDE advisory groups during September as part of a continuing effort to make the report more useful at the local level.

Staff from the Kentucky Department of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education will report on this initiative.